"Between 1900 and 1920 this artistic decline, especially in Cambodia, progressed so rapidly as to be a complete catastrophe. A circular of the Senior Resident in Cambodia of 13 July 1917 instructed all the Residencies to make a census of all known craftsmen engaged in any of the artistic industries. The replies showed that in all the provinces there were only 130 craftsmen, most of whom were obliged to engage in agriculture in order to earn a livelihood. In 1917 there were only 32 craftsmen making a meagre living from their art in Phom-Penh, the capital of the Khmer Kingdom. When the school of Cambodian Arts was established, it was impossible to find in Pnom-Penh a single Cambodian who knew how to make the traditional dyes and could teach others to do so; an old woman of sixty-five had to be brought from the interior to teach this craft. Only a single lacquer worker could be found and it was impossible to revive the art of niello [181] work, which had been common at the end of last century, because there was not a single craftsman acquainted with this branch. Indigenous art had almost died out because it could find no customers."

7: Thompson--377-378 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 874

"In 1909, and again in 1912, efforts were made to renovate Laos's pagoda schools. The bonzes did respond to the government's appeal to come to its training schools, but they left as soon as they had received a little instruction, and took positions in the administration. The programmes proposed to them had been too advanced for both teachers and students. They lacked textbooks and equipment in general: control and supervision were entirely missing. The quality and prestige [378] of Laotian bonzes was well below Cambodian standards, so it was impractical to count on the same degree of co-operation from them."

149: Reinach--124 G-8 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

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Although less pure than in Cambodia, the bonzes' morals in Laos are generally fairly good. They are, moreover, greatly loved, highly regarded and fondly cherished. When there is a celebration or a great feast in a family, part of the choicest dishes is always reserved for the bonzes.

On the next to the last day of every phase of the moon, the bonzes must make public confession of their faults and be prepared, should the need arise, to undergo the punishments which the code stipulates.

792

Bonzeries are schools and at the same time workshops where all trades are taught. All knowledge is concentrated in them, as our knowledge was during the Middle Ages in monasteries.

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Together with the pagodas, they are also spots of inviolable asylum in accordance with certain rights, and hostelries where travelers are lodged and fed with the produce of the bonzes' alms-seeking.

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778

Newly ordained bonzes must stay in the pagoda at least three months, and may quit their habit at the end of this period. If a bonze desires to return to the pagoda after he has reentered lay life, his reassumption of the habit gives rise to the same formalities and ceremonies as the first time. It is a new ordination.

792

The liturgical litanies of the Buddhist religion, which the bonzes psalmodize, may not be translated into Laotian. The bonzes and the [165] [Illustration] [166] [Blank page] [167] Laotian faithful, as well as the cantors and the French adepts, chant prayers whose meaning they do not understand (1).

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788

(1) In reality the Laotian, Lu and Youn bonzes form a sort of caste as the Druids used to in Gaul. More particularly, they are the ministers of worship, the repositories of moral authority, of scientific traditions, of secrets and of artistic and industrial methods. They transmit by word of mouth the precepts of Buddhist dogma, which were long ago explained by those who introduced the religion into the land. But the writings in "Pali" which contained these, although they can still be read mechanically by a few scholars, are no longer understood. Thence arises the necessity of handing down their meaning by word alone. Thence also, without doubt, arises the increasingly greater attenuation of the purity and force of these principles as they

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